

ATKINSON



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COASTAL ZONE
RESOURCES
CORPORATION

4505 FRANKLIN AVENUE
WILMINGTON, N.C. 28401

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A
LAND USE PLAN
FOR THE
TOWN OF ATKINSON, NORTH CAROLINA

Prepared in Accord with
State Guidelines for Local Planning in the Coastal Area
Under the Coastal Area Management Act of 1974.

Submitted to
North Carolina Coastal Resources Commission
May 21, 1976

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF A LAND USE PLAN IN NORTH CAROLINA COASTAL AREA MANAGEMENT

The North Carolina Coastal Area Management Act of 1974 Chapter 1284 1973 Session Laws (G. S. 113A) (CAMA) established "....a cooperative program of coastal area management between local and State governments" whereby "Local government shall have the initiative for planning."

Enactment of CAMA was based upon findings by the General Assembly that

- . "Among North Carolina's most valuable resources are its coastal lands and waters."
- . "the estuaries are among the most biologically productive regions of this State and of the nation"
- . "an immediate and pressing need exists to establish a comprehensive plan for the protection, preservation, orderly development, and management of the coastal area of North Carolina."

The CAMA established the following goals for the coastal area management system.

- "(1) To provide a management system capable of preserving and managing the natural ecological conditions of the estuarine system, the barrier dune system, and the beaches, so as to safeguard and perpetuate their natural productivity and their biological, economic and esthetic values;
- "(2) To insure that the development or preservation of the land and water resources of the coastal area proceeds in a manner consistent with the capability of the land and water for development, use, or preservation based on ecological considerations;
- "(3) To insure the orderly and balanced use and preservation of our coastal resources on behalf of the people of North Carolina and the nation;

"(4) To establish policies, guidelines and standards for:

- (i) Protection, preservation, and conservation of natural resources including but not limited to water use, scenic vistas, and fish and wildlife; and management of transitional or intensely developed areas and areas especially suited to intensive use of development, as well as areas of significant natural value;
- (ii) The economic development of the coastal area, including but not limited to construction, location and design of industries, port facilities, commercial establishment and other developments;
- (iii) Recreation and tourist facilities and parklands;
- (iv) Transportation and circulation patterns for the coastal area including major thoroughfares, transportation routes, navigation channels and harbors, and other public utilities and facilities;
- (v) Preservation and enhancement of the historic, cultural, and scientific aspects of the coastal area;
- (vi) Protection of present common law and statutory public rights in the lands and waters of the coastal area."

The planning processes established by the CAMA include: (a) State guidelines setting the objectives, policies and standards to be followed in public and private use of land and water within the coastal area; and (b) a land use plan for each county within the coastal area.

Following the procedures contained in the CAMA, the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of Atkinson declared the intent of the Town to prepare a land use plan in accordance with State Guidelines for Local Planning in the Coastal Area under the Coastal Area Management Act of 1974 (Guidelines) adopted by the North Carolina Coastal Resources on January 27, 1975, as subsequently amended.

The Guidelines mandate that each land use plan contain:

- 1) A statement of Local Land Use Objectives, Policies and Standards;
- 2) A Summary of Data Collection and Analysis;
- 3) An Existing Land Use Map;
- 4) A Land Classification Map;
- 5) Written text describing and indicating appropriate development for Interim Areas of Environmental Concern.

A land use plan is one of many elements that constitute a comprehensive plan for Atkinson. The land use plan expresses the way the democratically elected representatives of the people think the finite land area should be allocated to best meet the hopes and aspirations of the people who live and pay taxes in a specific jurisdiction. A land use plan can only be thorough when health care, education, transportation, economic development, leisure time, and other components of a comprehensive plan are tested against the people's goals and objectives so they can be integrated into the land use element.

Atkinson's land use plan relies upon those data most readily available and focuses upon the major emphases of the CAMA: development within the capability of the natural resources. Other topics, such as water and sewer, roads and streets, and employment are consistent with issues raised by the public, but are peripheral to establishing a basis for decision-making with respect to land.

It is Atkinson's intention to utilize the plan as a keystone for all future town activity. The land use plan is a major step in comprehensive

planning for Atkinson. Matters such as zoning, building codes, Town appearance, and community development can be based upon the plan; policy issues, such as annexation, taxes, maintenance of water quality, health care and employment are preliminarily identified for later study and decision-making as elements of the Town's comprehensive planning process.

METHOD OF PREPARING THE PLAN

The Atkinson land use plan was developed as an iterative process among elected and appointed public officials, the public, and professional resource specialists.

The iterative process: 1) Sampled public recognition of problems and opportunities in general terms; 2) defined the known physical, social, and institutional setting; 3) invited the public to participate in matching problem solutions with the setting by defining objectives and standards for the Town; 4) projected factors consistent with the selected Town goals and the physical restraints; and 5) allocated land according to the projected magnitude of demand and the physical characteristics of the Town.

Coastal Resources Commission Guidelines emphasize the need to map three sets of data: existing land use, land classified according to projected use in 1985, and areas that will be recommended as interim areas of environmental concern. However, there are no Interim Areas of Environmental Concern in Atkinson, as those areas are defined in the State Guidelines. Atkinson data were mapped at a scale of 1 inch = 400 ft. The basic map medium was an aerial photograph at a scale of 1 inch = 200 ft purchased from the U. S. Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

Existing land use was determined by air photo interpretation and visual inspection of structures, vegetation and water. This method of defining existing conditions permitted rapid identification of hazardous, fragile, and unique areas to see if any might constitute an area of environmental concern.

The air-photograph maps are easily reproducible and will serve as a useful public information tool. Additionally, the reproducible photograph

is available for use as a base map to support other planning activities and for implementation of the plan.

Details of Atkinson's public participation program are contained in Appendix A.

The CAMA sponsored planning in the Town was closely coordinated with comparable activities conducted by the Pender County Planning Board.

SECTION 1

CURRENT CONDITIONS

POPULATION AND ECONOMY

Settlement of the Town of Atkinson began in 1822 around a railway station. For the next 27 years the Town was called Lewis, named for the man who donated the lot for the station. The Town was incorporated in 1909 and renamed Atkinson in honor of an engineer involved in the completion of the Cape Fear and Yatkin Valley Railroad. For about the next 25 years, the town remained a small, but thriving rural community. Agriculture formed the basis of the economy of the area; the Seaboard Coastline Railroad ran regularly through the center of town establishing the town as a center for the marketing and transfer of the area's agricultural products. As railroad traffic has declined over the last 30 years, so has the ability of farming to provide a sound economic basis for the area. The railroad no longer runs through Atkinson, and farming is no longer the principal occupation.

Population

U. S. Census data report a slow but steady increase in the population of Atkinson over the last 25 years: in 1950, the population was 294; in 1960, 302; and in 1970, 325 (U. S. Department of Commerce, 1973). The most recent estimate, made in the town's application for Powell Bill funds, lists the current population at 340 persons.

The U. S. Department of Commerce classifies populations as Rural or Urban. Areas defined as being within a zone of commercial influence and having populations of 2500 or more are classed as Urban; all other areas are Rural. According to the 1970 U. S. Census of Population, all of Pender County, including Atkinson, is classed as Rural.

For the two decades between 1950 and 1970, there were not enough jobs available in the area to accommodate all of Atkinson's high school graduates and others seeking employment; agricultural activities were no longer able to absorb the new entrants into the labor force. Out-migration of the youth from the town resulted, leaving a disproportionate number of older people in the residual population. In the last five years, however, several new industries have opened in neighboring counties, particularly in adjacent New Hanover County. More of the labor force is now able to find jobs close enough to Atkinson to remain residents of the town. Furthermore, with increased employment opportunities, Atkinson is now seeing the return to residency of some of its natives who had formerly left town. The current trend is toward a more balanced age distribution than existed in years past.

Employment

It is estimated that presently one-half of the town's resident workers commute to neighboring counties for industrial jobs with General Electric on US 117, Castle Hayne; DuPont on NC 53W; Hercules on US 421 N; or Federal Paperboard Co. at Riegelwood. One-eighth of the labor force is employed in general commerce in Atkinson, such as grocery store, bank, and service station operation; only about one-fourth of the townspeople are employed in agriculture, producing mainly corn and tobacco; about one-eighth of the adult population of Atkinson is retired.^a

^aJohn Eakins, Mayor; Jean Butler, Town Clerk, Personal Interview, May 24, 1975.

Commerce

There are no major businesses or industries in Atkinson; the largest operation, a grill called Woody's Kitchen, employs only four people. In the last 10 years, several small businesses have been established including a garage-repair shop, a branch bank, the grill, and a fabric shop. A convenience store is presently under construction on NC 53, in the western section of town.

Atkinson's commerce can now fill most of the day-to-day shopping needs of its townspeople, including groceries, banking services, beauty needs, fabrics and the like. It is still necessary to leave town to obtain the professional services of doctors, lawyers, and dentists. Burgaw is the most common shopping place for professional services and for prescription drugs, large items such as furniture and appliances, and specialty goods and services. Some of the commuters working in and around Wilmington find choices larger and prices lower in the Wilmington area and do much of their shopping on the way home from work. For most Atkinson residents, however, the 41 mile trip to Wilmington is made only on special occasions.

EXISTING LAND USE

The Town of Atkinson is located in Caswell Township in the western part of Pender County, 15.5 miles virtually due west of Burgaw. The town is accessible from Burgaw by NC 53, and from Wilmington by US 421 to NC 53. Wilmington is the population center closest to Atkinson, located 41 miles to the southeast.

According to 1970 U. S. census data, there are no parts of Pender County that meet the population density criteria for being classified as Urban. All of the county, including Atkinson, is classified Rural-Farm or Rural-Nonfarm. For the purpose of discussing existing land use in Atkinson, however, the term Urban will refer to nonfarm areas with a build-up of residential and/or commercial structures.

There is presently no zoning ordinance or subdivision regulation that applies to land use in Atkinson. Throughout the town limits, land use is mixed, with residential, commercial, recreational, public and institutional land occurring together in a random fashion. The area of town that serves as the central business district extends for one block east along NC 53, starting at the intersection of NC 53 and First Street. Located in this one block area are a gas pump, barber, beauty and fabric shops, a grocery store, insurance office, service station, grill, bank and a post office.

NC 53 traverses the Town of Atkinson from northeast to southwest, becoming the main street within the town limits. At the time of its incorporation in 1909, and for the next 60 years, the Seaboard Coastline Railroad traversed the town from southeast to northwest. The railroad tracks were removed in 1972, but the right-of-way and First Street, which runs parallel and to the east of the right-of-way, continue to

function as a transportation corridor. The town, by virtue of NC 53 and First Street, is divided into four sections -- north, east, south, and west.

In the eastern section of Atkinson, land is developed for urban uses for only two blocks along First Street and five blocks along NC 53. In this section are several residences, including some mobile homes, commercial activities, a Masonic Lodge, and a church. The main drainage canal of the town empties into Mill Branch which, with its tributaries, runs through this section of town. Little of the land in this section is presently being used for urban purposes; most is in timber stands of mixed pine and hardwood; the rest is farmed. There are no roads extending into this area for more than one block, and no new roads have been proposed to extend into it further.

In the southern section of Atkinson, land has been developed for urban uses for five blocks along NC 53, and for one and one-half blocks along the railroad right-of-way. Most buildings are residences, though a monument yard, welding shop, women's club house, and beauty shop are located here. The Town of Atkinson owns the block of land at the intersection of First Street and NC 53, having bought it in 1974 from the railroad company. The Town's new medical clinic being built in this block is expected to take up about 400 sq. ft. of the 900 sq. ft. of area. Presently streets extend for one and one-half to three blocks into this section of town, with new streets proposed to extend for a total of five blocks. Most of the land in this part of town that is not being used for urban purposes is presently supporting timber stands, some of which have recently been cutover; there is a small amount of farmland in the extreme southern part.

In the western section of Atkinson, land is developed for urban uses for five blocks along NC 53 and for one and one-half blocks along First Street.^a Land use in this section is predominantly residential, especially on those lots that are not located on NC 53. In addition to the housing in this section are ABC, grocery and convenience stores, a garage, and two churches, all located on NC 53. Atkinson Junior High School is located in the second block off of NC 53. Roads extend into this section of town for only one to five blocks, with the exception of Sunset Street which continues northwestward across the town limits becoming SR 1218. The land in this section of town that is not being used for urban purposes is in the west being farmed, and in the northwest supporting a pine plantation.

Land is presently being used most intensively in the northern section of Atkinson, with urban land use extending northwest and northeast nearly to the town limits. Blocks are large, with only one street, Henry Street, running parallel to NC 53. The block located at the intersection of NC 53 and First Street is owned in large part by the Town of Atkinson, and contains the Town Hall, Volunteer Fire Department and the Town Park. Land use away from NC 53 is residential, with the exception of a church and electrical shop toward the NW town limits. Most of the land here not presently used for urban purposes is farmed, with some in the north supporting timber.

There is no land in or immediately surrounding Atkinson currently being used for industry. There are two tracts of land in Atkinson that

^aBlocks in western and northern sections of Atkinson are twice as long as those in the eastern and southern sections.

have been proposed by the Town (in accord with the owner) to be used as industrial sites. One of these sites is located in the southern section of town, along NC 53 from Pope Street to the Town limits, and is presently supporting timber. The second proposed industrial site is located to the northwest of the school, extending to the town limits between Sunset Street and the railroad right-of-way. Part of this site has been recently cut-over, the rest is a pine plantation.

The only lands in Atkinson equipped for recreational use are the Town Park and school yard. Conversion of the abandoned Atlantic Coastline Railroad right-of-way, from Richards in Pender County to Kerr in Sampson County, to a recreation-historic-nature trail has been proposed by some Pender County residents. Development of this trail would create additional recreation land in a strip through the town, providing land for hiking and camping for residents of Atkinson as well as tourists.

REGULATIONS AND POLICIES CONCERNING LAND USE

Location Regulations

There are no zoning or subdivision regulations that apply to land use in Atkinson, but the Town of Atkinson "Code of General Ordinances in 1973" describes structural, lot size, and building location requirements in the town. Atkinson has adopted the 1968 edition of the North Carolina State Building Code as its standard; a building permit is required for construction or alteration of buildings and for the location of mobile homes. A permit from the Town Clerk is required for the establishment of private water supplies and sewage disposal systems. Before location of a mobile home on a lot, written assent must be obtained from adjoining lot owners and residents, and a copy of that assent must be filed with the Town Clerk.

Authority for enforcement of the Town Ordinances that concern building and lot requirements is conferred on a Building Inspector to be appointed by the Town Aldermen. Condemnation decisions, however, are made by the Aldermen, on the recommendations of the Building Inspector, Fire Chief, and Mayor.

Plans

The only plans relating to land use that have been developed for Atkinson concern public water and sewer facilities. At the request of the Town Board a preliminary engineering report (PER) of the feasibility of public water and sewer systems in Atkinson has been prepared by Henry von Oesen and Associates, Inc. (1974), Consulting Engineers and Planners. The PER recommends that both water supply and waste water collection and treatment systems be developed in Atkinson with the financial assistance of the Farmers Home Administration

CONSTRAINTS

There are certain areas of Atkinson where development would be either especially costly or likely to cause undesirable consequences because of the inherent characteristics of the land and water. The permeability of soils, their susceptibility to flooding, and their biological productivity can and have exerted influence upon the choice of land areas that can most economically, and with the least risk and uncertainty, be put to various uses.

Flooding

The U. S. Geological Survey is in the process of mapping Flood Prone Areas of Pender County. The purpose of these maps as stated on each map is to "show administrators, planners and engineers concerned with future land developments those areas that are subject to flooding." The flood prone areas shown on these maps have a 1 in 100 chance on the average of being inundated during any year. The flood areas are being delineated without consideration of present or future flood control storage that may reduce flood levels.

The Flood Prone Area map of the Atkinson area has been completed, and shows the town to be located well outside the area subjected to inundation by the nearest large stream, the Black River. The Black River flows approximately four miles from Atkinson and its flood prone area falls within the 30 ft. msl elevation line in this vicinity. Atkinson is at an average elevation of about 60 ft. msl. Within the town, however, the water table remains relatively high throughout most of the year and the permeability of some of the soils is low; as a result, temporary ponding of water in streets and yards often follows periods of heavy rainfall. The Town maintains a network of drainage ditches which flow into a central

canal in the southeastern part of town. Water from the canal empties into Mill Branch, which enters Moore's Creek southeast of Atkinson. During some periods of heavy rainfall when runoff is extremely high, Moore's Creek is unable to contain all of the water flowing into it; the resultant overload of the creek causes a backup of water in Mill Branch and the drainage canals, causing further ponding in Atkinson.

Soils

According to the U. S. Soil Conservation Service (SCS) "General Soil Map and Interpretations for Pender County," Atkinson is located entirely within the Lumbee-Johns-Kalmia Soil Association. This association is made up predominantly of the Lumbee, Johns, and Kalmia soils each of which has its particular characteristics and suitability for various purposes. The Lumbee soils are poorly drained and have gray or dark gray surfaces over gray friable sandy clay loam subsoils. The Lumbee soils occur chiefly on stream terraces and make up about 40 percent of the association. The Johns soils are moderately well and somewhat poorly drained with gray sandy surfaces over friable sandy clay loam subsoils. Johns soils occur on level uplands and on stream terraces and make up about 30 percent of the association. The Kalmia soils are well drained with light gray sandy loam or loamy sand surface over yellowish brown sandy clay loam subsoils. The Kalmia soils occur on nearly level to gently sloping uplands and stream terraces and make up about 20 percent of the association. The subsoils of all three of these soils are underlain by sandy material at depths generally less than 40 inches.

The Lumbee-Johns-Kalmia association includes a dominant portion of the cropland in the county and most of its soils are well suited for

both agricultural and woodland uses. The chief limitations for most residential and commercial uses of these soils are wetness and flooding. The Kalmia soils have only slight limitations for septic tank fields, structures, and roads and streets; the Johns soils have moderate to severe limitations for the above uses due to their susceptibility to flooding; the Lumbee soils have severe limitations for all the above uses plus agriculture, due to their wetness and susceptibility to flooding (U. S. Soil Conservation Service 1973).

Sources of Water Supply

Ground water comprises the sole source of water supply in Atkinson as in the rest of Pender County (Wiggins-Rimer and Associates 1973). The county is underlain by a large aquifer system from which potable water can be drawn at various depths in different localities. There are four geologic strata in the aquifer system, two of which are important as sources of water supply in Atkinson.

The Pleistocene and Recent surficial sands cover most of Pender County and constitute a major water source for individual wells in Atkinson (Henry von Oesen and Associates 1974). In the surficial sands, water occurs under water table conditions usually within 15 ft. of the land surface. Recharge is accomplished directly by rainfall, subjecting the water to possible contamination from the ground surface. The productivity of this aquifer is limited primarily by its thickness, which varies locally. In most cases, water yields from wells in the surficial sands are sufficient for domestic and farm uses; in periods of drought, however, or when large amounts of water are needed as for fire fighting, yields have sometimes proven inadequate (Wiggins-Rimer and Associates 1973). In places where shallow wells are located too close to septic tank fields, contamination of this water supply may result.

The Peedee Cretaceous sands, limestone and marine clays occur throughout Pender County and serve as an important source of water supply in many areas west of the Northeast Cape Fear River. Wells in the Peedee vary from 50-200 ft. deep and yield up to 300 gpm (Wiggins-Rimer and Associates 1973). Water quality and yields for specific locations can be determined only on an individual case basis. Some existing wells in Atkinson yield water with high concentrations of iron and hydrogen sulfide to which residents have become accustomed but which newcomers may find objectionable.

The Peedee formation immediately underlies the surficial sands in the Atkinson area and is recharged directly by rainfall.

Slopes

The Atkinson area of Pender County is characterized by low rolling hills along water courses, on otherwise nearly level ground; within the town there is little natural elevation change. Grading of the land surface during development is required only to the extent necessary to facilitate proper water runoff to prevent ponding, and to insure good foundations for structures. There are no steep slopes within the town, the nearest ones being to the southwest along the Black River and to the east near Ward's Corner. Along parts of NC 53 between the Black River and Atkinson there are scenic areas of elevation change and hardwood stands; a scenic drive can also be found on SR 1201, one and one-half miles northwest of Atkinson.

Wildlife

Located to the north of Atkinson is a pocosin that is drained by Mill Branch. Characterized by wet ground and slowly moving water, dense shrub and low tree vegetation, this pocosin constitutes good wildlife habitat. Throughout the Atkinson area, vegetation varies from cropland to

pine stands and hardwood stands, creating conditions favorable to wildlife, primarily deer.

Community Services

The Town of Atkinson's services include a one-man police force and a 31 member volunteer fire department. The fire department equipment includes 1946 and 1970 pumpers, a 1958 tanker, a 350 gpm pump, and a 1973 van for carrying breathing apparatus and other small equipment. The fire department serves the town and surrounding area within a 3-mile radius; it is funded by the Town, annual appropriations from the County, private contributions, fire district taxes and fund raising campaigns.

Under the auspices of the North Carolina Rural Health Services, a medical clinic has recently been constructed in Atkinson and opened in September 1975. The clinic provides a full-time family nurse practitioner and two Burgaw doctors on call. Each doctor also spends one-half day each week in the clinic. Efforts are being made by the mayor to find a way to incorporate a prescription drug store in the facility so that people using the clinic can obtain medicine in Atkinson rather than travelling to Burgaw.

The Town provides a maintenance operation to work principally on streets and ditches in the town.

The Town government's main sources of revenue are property taxes and ABC revenue and intergovernmental revenue sharing. The Town's main expenses are the police force and maintenance operations.

Many community facilities offered in Pender County are operated on a county-wide basis out of the town of Burgaw, the county seat. Road networks in the western part of the county are integrated and distributed in such a manner as to make the delivery of services out of Burgaw efficient for the area. Atkinson is located approximately 15.5 miles west of Burgaw and is within one-half hour's driving time from the town.

The Pender County Memorial Hospital is located in Burgaw and offers X-ray, laboratory, dietary, surgical, and delivery room services to county residents. The hospital and adjacent Medical Center operate health clinics and an emergency room and maintain four Pender County doctors on staff.

Public education is operated by the County. Atkinson youth attend grades K-5 at West Pender Elementary, grades 6-9 at Atkinson Junior High, and grades 10-12 at Pender High School in Burgaw. A school bus service is operated by the County and provides transportation for all grades.

A volunteer organization, the Pender County Rescue Squad, Inc., was formed in 1961 to serve the whole of Pender County west of the AIWW. Calls from throughout the area come to the county dispatcher in Burgaw, who sends out emergency vehicles as needed. The squad is maintained financially by an annual appropriation from the Town of Burgaw and Pender County, and by public donations and an annual fund raising project.

Solid waste collection and disposal for the unincorporated parts of Pender County west of the AIWW has been operated by the County since February, 1973. There is one landfill for the area, located on SR 1640, four

miles west of Burgaw. The Town of Atkinson brings garbage to four established collection boxes located on the periphery of town. The collection truck makes as many rounds to each box as necessary two days each week, followed by deliveries to the landfill.

Water Supply-Wastewater Disposal

There are no public water supplies presently in operation in the Town of Atkinson. All of the townspeople rely on individual wells or small private systems (10 connections or less) for their water supplies. Groundwater comprises the sole source of water, with many water table wells drawing water from the Surficial Sands. Throughout the town, the shallow wells produce water with a relatively high iron content causing some staining and taste and odor problems. Productivity of the shallow wells varies but is generally adequate for domestic and farm needs. Water from deeper wells, such as those drawing from the Peedee formation, is generally of acceptable quality and quantity.

The Town of Akinson has been studying the need for and feasibility of a municipal water supply. At this time, however, the townspeople, most of whom are satisfied with the existing supply, question the need for such a system, and have not applied for funds for its construction.

There is no public wastewater disposal facility in Atkinson. All of the people rely on private wastewater disposal systems serving individual residences and using subsurface disposal methods, either septic tanks or privies. Some problems have been encountered in the town with contamination of shallow wells by sewage; the characteristically high water table,

especially in periods of heavy rains can rise close to the surface and make contact with effluent. Some of the pollution problems are related to the soil conditions; where the impermeability of the soils hinders the flow of effluent downward, lateral flow into the Town's drainage ditches can occur. The drainage of effluent into ditches poses a potential threat to the health of the residents of Atkinson and areas downstream. Some problems, however, are more likely to stem from improper location, installation, or maintenance of the sewage disposal system.

A study of the need for and feasibility of a municipal sewage treatment facility has been conducted for the Town of Atkinson. The Town is presently reviewing the study and deciding on a course of action.

There have been no fragile areas, hazard areas or other areas with resource potential identified in Atkinson, nor are there any significant land use compatibility problems, major problems resulting from unplanned development, or areas experiencing or likely to experience major changes in predominant land uses. There is virtually no seasonal population change or economic activity which uses, depends on or may impair land and water resources. There are no municipal floodway ordinances, building codes, septic tank regulations, dune protection ordinances, sedimentation codes or environmental impact statement ordinances.

SECTION 2

ISSUES, OBJECTIVES, AND STANDARDS

MAJOR ISSUES AND GENERAL ALTERNATIVES

On September 24, 1975, a Town Meeting was held in Atkinson for purpose of discussing the future of the Town. There were 68 resident adults in attendance, about 20 percent of the total population. In the course of the meeting the following issues were discussed; informal votes were taken on each issue to obtain a consensus of opinion.

Population

The present population of Atkinson is about 340. This figure represents a 12.5 percent population increase overall since 1960, or an .8 percent increase per year. Between 1970 and 1975, the increase was .9 percent per year. A continuation of the 1970 to 1975 rate would result in a population of 375 in 1980; 405 in 1985, 440 in 1990, and 525 in 2000.

Atkinson is a small rural town; its residents like it that way and want it to remain the same in the future. Maintenance of the 1970 to 1975 growth rate would allow for natural increases in population due to the birth rate, for young adults to remain residents of the Town, and for older residents to retire in the community. Much higher a growth rate would require new service facilities and annexation of property adjacent to the Town in order to accommodate new residents at the desired low density. A lower or "no growth" rate, which would result from the outmigration of productive youth and young adults, would ultimately change the family-oriented community into a retirement village.

Employment

Much of the Atkinson labor force commutes long distances to jobs in neighboring counties. Commuting allows residents to live in their rural

home town but work and shop in more urbanized areas. The ever increasing price of gasoline, however, will put increasing economic pressure on the commuting population to move closer to their place of work; to move out of Atkinson.

Atkinson has never been the site of heavy industry. Former business enterprises have centered around the railroad and the area's agricultural activities. There are two sites in the town proposed for industrial location, should industry choose to locate in the town. But neither site is large, and neither has the water or sewer facilities often desired by industry. The location of industry in the town, even if it were feasible given the limited amount of land in the jurisdiction, would tend to change the rural atmosphere of the Town; the use of the undeveloped land for industrial purposes would tend to force new residential growth to occur outside the town limits. The location of light industry outside but near the town would allow Atkinson residents the opportunity of working in their own county, near their place of residence. Industry near the town could conceivably encourage the location within the town of professional and service support enterprises, as well as promote the expansion of existing Atkinson commerce.

Service Facilities

The lack of industry and large commercial enterprises in Atkinson results in a low property tax base from which to draw the revenue required for municipal service facilities. Most services currently in operation in the town are maintained cooperatively by the County, Town, and volunteer organizations. Atkinson's size limits the amount of services that can cost

effectively be maintained by the Town alone. A large compactor type garbage truck, for instance, as well as a landfill for the single town, cannot be justified. Equipment required for maintaining the town's drainage system would stand idle much of the time if it were operated in Atkinson only. The small population cannot even support a single doctor or dentist practicing only in the immediate area.

The Town's residents consider a limited amount of publicly operated services an acceptable price to pay for their rural lifestyle. Voluntary local manpower can often accomplish efficiently and free of charge some service provisions that the Town government could not. Certain services usually provided in urban centers, such as public transportation and entertainment, are willingly forsaken in Atkinson as infeasible under the rural conditions they desire.

There are problems in Atkinson, however, that concern the health and safety of the townspeople and, to a certain extent, residents of unincorporated areas nearby. Specifically, the contamination of shallow water table wells and surface waters in ditches, by improperly functioning sewage disposal systems, is a municipal-wide problem which the public sector must try to solve. But solutions are hard to find.

Outside funding could provide as much as 87 percent of the money needed for a municipal water and sewer system; but the remaining 13 percent, plus future operations and maintenance costs, would be the responsibility of the Town. Atkinson residents are aware of the pollution problem; but they are also aware of the high cost of maintenance, operation, and individual connection and use fees they would be required to pay. Higher

taxes and fees would be problem enough for the working residents who constitute the bulk of the adult population; but for the retired people, many of whom are living on social security or other low fixed incomes, the taxes and fees required would be impossible to meet.

The municipal services most desired by Atkinson residents are supervised recreational areas and facilities. The Town has a public park, but there are virtually no recreation facilities in the park at present. There are some organized athletic activities, such as softball teams, currently utilizing the school yard fields. The townspeople would like to establish a center for the community recreation, meeting, fund raising activities that currently take place in a variety of places, i.e. wherever possible.

Regulation of Growth

There are currently no zoning or subdivision regulations to control growth in Atkinson. Growth in the area has always occurred slowly, most of it within the municipal jurisdiction. There is no "urban sprawl" threatening agricultural land use, and with the lack of industrial and business activity, few problems with property values or conflicting demands for land have occurred. Atkinson residents realize that such problems have occurred in other municipalities where growth has been unplanned and unregulated; they recognize the need for well established public policies to ensure that growth in the future will be consistent with standards set for their desired lifestyle.

Implementation and enforcement of Town policy will require some professional expertise. Presently the responsibility for condemnation proceedings and mobile home location approvals rest with the Town Board of Aldermen. The building inspector is charged with the responsibility for building permits; the County Sanitarian has the power to enforce the N. C. State septic tank regulations. The coordination of these authorities in a single body could both simplify permit issuance and reenforce public policy.

In response to public opinion in the Town Meeting, the Town of Atkinson has established the following Objectives and Standards for future growth and development in the Town.

OBJECTIVES AND STANDARDS OF ATKINSON

Objective: Atkinson will promote the continued gradual development of the Town as a rural, family-oriented community.

- Standard:
- 1) Public services, including police and fire protection, solid waste collection, and medical and recreational facilities will be planned for a population of 375 in 1980, 440 in 1990 and 525 in 2000.
 - 2) The Town will encourage the location of future residential growth within the municipal jurisdiction; public services supported by the Town with the exception of fire protection will be provided only within the existing municipal boundaries.
 - 3) The Town will encourage the location of professional and service businesses within the municipal jurisdiction.
 - 4) The Town will discourage the location of industry within the municipal jurisdiction, but will encourage light industry location in more urbanized areas of Pender County.
 - 5) The Town will cooperate with Pender County, the Cape Fear Council of Governments and the Community Development Committee in order to coordinate planning efforts and facilitate implementation of Town policies.

Objective: The Town of Atkinson will continue to try to eliminate any health problems caused by the physical limitations of the soils and drainage system.

Standards: 1) In order to correct any improperly functioning septic systems, the town will seek the assistance of County Health Department personnel to determine the cause and extent of ground and surface water pollution.

2) The Town will seek County cooperation in assuring the proper maintenance of the drainage ditch system.

Objective: The Town of Atkinson will attempt to provide public recreation facilities for all its population.

Standards: 1) A recreation committee will be formed in order to survey the recreational needs of the Town and to establish priorities for recreational facility development.

2) The Town will endeavor to establish a Town Center to house recreational, meeting and fund raising activities.

SECTION 3

FUTURE LAND USE

FACTORS INFLUENCING GROWTH

The 1975 Atkinson population was estimated to be 340. Projections for the future call for gradual population increase to between 405 and 425 in 1985 and about 525 in the year 2000.

The projections developed by the Town for future growth in Atkinson -- a population of 405 in 1985, for instance -- are based on the estimated rate of growth incurred between 1970 and 1975. That growth can be attributed partly to natural increases due to the birth rate, but also to people moving into (or back into) the Town because of increased job opportunities in neighboring counties. Even though the town is located 30 to 35 miles from some of these employment centers, its overall appeal as a nice place to live, the friendliness of its people, and its low taxes can attract and hold people that might otherwise move closer to their place of work.

Pender County has initiated an economic development program, part of which involves promoting in-county employment by expanding existing business and locating new markets and industries. The county has also established a growth policy of encouraging new residential and commercial development within or adjacent to existing communities, in order to reduce urban sprawl and the associated costs of servicing sprawl development. Associated with its economic development program, the county has established a County-wide growth goal calling for a population of 20,800 by 1985 and 25,000 by 1995; this growth goal exceeds projections based on recent historical trends. In estimating the 1985 distribution of the population increase throughout the county, a somewhat larger increase is predicted for Atkinson than the community itself has predicted. Specifically, the County has projected a population of 425 for Atkinson by 1985.

Atkinson is encouraging the location of light industry in the county close enough to the Town that its residents can work within reasonable commuting time from the place where they live. The Town's projections for future growth are based on assumptions of their being enough employment nearby for its natives to remain residents; the projections don't, however, take into account the possibility of a shift in residence that could result from the location of new employment centers nearby. County projections do take this possibility into account, and assume that much of the new residential growth will occur within the Town rather than scattered in more rural areas; for that reason, its projections for Atkinson are higher. The difference between these two projections, however, does not represent a conflict between municipal and county policy -- only a difference in estimations of the probability and impact of light industry's location in the area.

Atkinson supports the County policy of accommodating population increases within existing communities. The Town is discouraging sprawl or strip development outside the town limits by establishing the policy of limiting extension of existing or future services, such as street paving, ditch maintenance and police protection, to areas within the jurisdiction.

LAND CLASSIFICATION

The Land Classification System (LCS) was established by the N. C. Land Policy Council for localities to use to identify the most appropriate general uses of various kinds of land and to make a statement to state and federal authorities, as well as local residents, on where and to what density growth is desired.

The LCS includes the following five categories of land:

1. Developed -- Lands where existing population density is moderate to high and where there is a variety of land uses which have the necessary public services.
2. Transitional -- Lands where local government plans to accommodate moderate to high density development during the following ten-year period and where necessary public services will be provided to accommodate that growth.
3. Community -- Lands where low density development is grouped in existing settlements or will occur in such settlements during the following ten-year period and will not require extensive public services now or in the future.
4. Rural -- Lands whose highest use is for agriculture, forestry, mining, water supply, etc., based on their natural resource potential. Also, lands for future needs not currently recognized.
5. Conservation -- Fragile, hazardous and other lands necessary to maintain a healthy natural environment and necessary to provide for the public health, safety and welfare.

Current land use in Atkinson would allow a separation of the town into two of the above classes -- Community (developed) and Rural (undeveloped).

There are no Areas of Environmental Concern to warrant the Conservation category. Only about half of the land in the jurisdiction is currently developed. The rest is in forest or farmland. There is, therefore, enough land within the jurisdiction to accommodate the population increases predicted by either the Town or County as well as any increases in commercial land necessary to support the residential growth. The Town owns the block of land at the intersection of First Street and NC 53, only part of which has been taken up by the new medical center; the rest of this block could be used for any municipal facilities which may in the future be needed.

Actually, there are probably enough single lots and other small parcels of land within the developed parts of Town to accommodate future land needs. However, some pollution problems have been encountered in the built-up area. Many of these problems may be attributable more to the improper location, installation or maintenance of the septic tanks in use than to the inherent limitations of the soils to accommodate septic tanks at the existing densities. The Town is requesting assistance from the County Health Department in assessing the cause and extent of these problems and will, if necessary, make provision to require larger lot sizes in the future if the density of population is found to be a main cause. Requiring larger lot sizes in the future could necessitate development of parts of the yet undeveloped land; for that reason, the entire jurisdiction is designated Community. The Community designation is a policy determination that density of development in the future will remain low enough that no public sewer or water lines will be necessary, since the townspeople have indicated an unwillingness to accept the financial burden of a municipal sewer and water system.

IMPLEMENTATION OF TOWN POLICIES

The primary goal of Atkinson is for the Town to remain much the way it is -- a rural community where residents can enjoy a safe, healthful environment. Town policies to achieve and support that goal have been established. In order to implement those policies, future planning efforts will be focused on three major endeavors:

1. Septic tank study -

In order to assess the extent of the pollution problems so as to begin solving them, the town is requesting assistance from the County Health Department. The Town proposes evaluation of each septic tank system in the town, with repair or reinstallation required for each one found to be defective. The authority for granting permits for installing septic tanks rests with the county; Atkinson will encourage the county to develop new or revised septic tank regulations in the future, adequate to prevent recurrence of the pollution problems. Meanwhile, the town will consider the necessity for establishing zoning or subdivision regulations for the Town requiring lots to be sufficiently large to accommodate on-site sewage disposal systems and water supplies safely.

2. Recreation program -

Because of the limited tax base in the town and the lack of a substantial increase in that tax base foreseen in the near future, the kinds of services the town will be able to offer will remain limited. The townspeople in the Town meeting gave highest priority to the development of supervised municipal park and recreation facilities. In particular, residents would like to have established a center for the community recreation, meeting and fund raising activities that currently take place

at random locations in the town. A recreation committee has been established to study the feasibility of such a recreation program, and to obtain new and more diverse equipment for the town park.

3. City-County coordination -

The Atkinson Land Use Plan was closely coordinated with the Pender County Plan. In addition to the Atkinson Town Meeting, one of the four Pender County Public Participation meetings was held in Atkinson to obtain local area views on County policy matters. A joint public hearing for the County and municipal Plans was held in Burgaw in order to present the various Plans prepared in the County and ensure compatibility among them.

The future of the Town of Atkinson is strongly related to the future of Pender County, in particular, to the success of a well organized and directed economic development program. Growth policies, concerning proper land management and use practices and the solicitation of certain selected kinds of businesses have been established in the Pender County Land Use Plan. Atkinson supports county policies and encourages adherence to those policies in the future. The Town also recognizes that many planning programs, for economic and rural development, are initiated on the County level. For that reason, the Town will continue to coordinate its planning activities with the County. Review and revision of the Atkinson Plan in the future will be done in coordination with the County Plan.

SECTION 4

REFERENCES CITED

References Cited

U. S. Department of Commerce. 1973. U. S. census of population 1970 -- characteristics of the population -- North Carolina. U. S. Government Printing Office. Washington, D. C.

Von Oesen, Henry and Associates. 1974. Preliminary engineering report -- proposed water and sewer systems, Town of Atkinson, North Carolina. Henry von Oesen and Associates, Inc. Wilmington, N. C.

Wiggins-Rimer and Associates. 1973. Inventory of facilities -- regional water supply and waste water disposal study. Cape Fear Council of Governments. Wilmington, N. C.

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In order to assess public opinion on specific issues facing the Town and on desired courses of action, a Town Meeting was held on September 24, 1975, in the firehouse. Prior to the meeting, questionnaires (Exhibit A-1) were distributed to every household in the Town. It was initially intended that the questions asked in the announcement of the meeting be discussed during the meeting but answered later by filling in the spaces provided. During the meeting, however, discussion became heavy, and votes on particular questions were called for and taken. The results of those votes (where taken) are summarized in Exhibit A-2.

Total Town resident attendance at the meeting was 68 (67 adults), or approximately 35 percent of the adult population.

ANNOUNCING

A TOWN MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 24, 1975

AT THE FIRE HOUSE - 8:00 p.m.

TO

DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF ATKINSON

Under the North Carolina Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA), the Governor declared 20 counties to be the "Coastal Area" of North Carolina and thus subject to the provisions of CAMA. A key requirement of the CAMA is preparation of land use plans for the Coastal Area. The plans could be prepared by the cities, towns and counties or the planning would be done by State agencies. Your Town Government elected to have the citizens of Atkinson plan for their own future.

Upon completion, the plan can serve as a basis for Town budgets and telling others what we want for our Town. The best way to plan is to have goals and objectives that you establish. That is why we want your opinions. Please plan to attend our Town Meeting on Wednesday, September 24, 1975. FREE COFFEE AND COLD DRINKS WILL BE AVAILABLE. Think about the following issues; be prepared to say how you feel about each one and to bring to our attention other issues that are bothering you.

1. How big should Atkinson become?

Our population is now about 340; that is an increase of 46 since 1950. But the rate is accelerating: 21 persons have been added since 1970. If the 1970-75 trend continues, we could have a population of 375 in 1980; 440 in 1990, and 525 in 2000. *Would this be too large? just right? not enough?*

2. Where should employment be located?

Heavy Industry: in Atkinson _____; unincorporated area near Atkinson _____; elsewhere in Pender County _____; other Counties _____.

Light Industry: in Atkinson _____; unincorporated area near Atkinson _____; elsewhere in Pender County _____; other Counties _____.

Professional & Service: in Atkinson _____; unincorporated
area near Atkinson _____; elsewhere
in Pender County _____; other
Counties _____.

3. Do you favor a sewer system?
4. Will a central water system be necessary if the Town is to achieve your expectations?
5. Should growth be limited to the capacity of individual wells and properly operating septic fields?
6. Are recreation facilities in Atkinson adequate? If not, what should be added?
7. Are you satisfied with services provided by the Town? If not, are you willing to pay for increased services through increases in Town Taxes?
8. Does Atkinson receive its fair share of County Services? If not, what else should the County provide?
9. How should your Mayor and Aldermen act to achieve the quality of life you expect?
Enact zoning regulations _____
Enact subdivision regulations _____
Enforce building codes _____
Establish a separate fund to attract employers _____
Arrange for free land, tax incentives, and utilities to attract employers _____
10. Should trailers be permitted in Town? If so, under what conditions?

COME TO THE FIRE HOUSE

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 - 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBIT A-2. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC OPINION IN TOWN MEETING

Question 1. How big should Atkinson become?

No formal vote taken; informal consensus that the present (1970 to 1975) growth rate is right for the town.

Question 2. Where should employment be located?

(a) Heavy industry: in Atkinson - 0
unincorporated area near Atkinson - 20
elsewhere in Pender County - 4

(b) Light industry: in Atkinson - 0
unincorporated area near Atkinson - 42
elsewhere in Pender County - 0

(c) Professional & Service: in Atkinson - 43
unincorporated area near Atkinson - 0
elsewhere in Pender County - 0

Question 3. Do you favor a sewer system?

Yes - 24 (35%) No - 30 (44%)

Question 4. Will a central water system be necessary if the Town is to achieve your expectations?

Yes - 19 (28%) No - no formal count but informal consensus that central water would be too expensive.

Question 5. Should growth be limited to the capacity of individual wells and properly operating septic tanks?

Yes - informal consensus

Question 6. Are recreation facilities in Atkinson adequate? If not, what should be added?

No - need a supervised playfield, maybe tennis courts, and community center.

Question 7. Are you satisfied with services provided by the Town? If not, are you willing to pay for increased services through increases in Town taxes?

Get what you pay for? 36 (53%) Yes

Increase taxes? 19 (28%) Yes

Improve ditches and garbage collection - informal consensus

Question 8. Does Atkinson receive its fair share of County services? If not, what else should the County provide?

Consensus - no. There is no mosquito control and there are too few solid waste containers.

Question 9. How should your Mayor and Aldermen act to achieve the quality of life you expect?

Enact zoning regulations - no opposition
Enact subdivision regulations - no opposition
Enforce building codes - 18 (26%)
Others not specifically addressed.

Question 10. Should trailers be permitted in Town? If so, under what conditions?

Yes - 52 (76%) under the same conditions as single family detached structures. There was consensus, however, that there be no trailer parks.

Additional question - Do you favor establishing a sewer and water system?

22 (32%) Yes 31 (46%) No

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